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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 000888

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DEPARTMENT PASS TO AID/OTI (RPORTER)

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: CHAVEZ CHALLENGES PRESIDENT OBAMA TO PROVE USG
WASN'T INVOLVED IN HONDURAN COUP

REF: CARACAS 00858

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Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ, FOR REASON 1.4(D)

11. (C) Summary: In an eight-hour "Alo, Presidente" TV and radio broadcast July 12, President Chavez rained criticisms on the US Government, challenging President Obama to withdraw US troops from the joint US-Honduran Palmerola military base to "prove" the US was not involved in the Honduran coup. He alleged that other USG elements, including the State Department and CIA, are directing "imperialist" actions in the region, but allowed that President Obama might not be involved. Chavez also blasted Secretary Clinton's July 7 interview with Globovision (reftel) and suggested that elements within the Honduran military were preparing to act against Micheletti's interim government in Tegucigalpa -- apparently a hopeful parallel to his own restoration to power by the Venezuelan military during the 2002 coup. End Summary.

CHAVEZ: "PROVE IT, OBAMA"

12. (SBU) On his weekly "Alo, Presidente" TV and radio broadcast July 12 from Aragua State, which lasted about eight hours, Chavez asked President Obama to withdraw US soldiers from the military base in Palmerola, Honduras. (Note: Palmerola is commonly known as Soto Cano and is the home of Joint Taskforce Bravo under US Southern Command. End Note.) Chavez asserted that "if the government of the United States truly did not support the coup, they would have removed all of their military forces from their base in Palmerola. Do it, Obama, with that you will be demonstrating that you are not supporting that coup." He added that President Obama is in "the hour of proof" and asked that he "freeze the accounts and properties of (the coupists) in the United States... because they are breathing the empire's oxygen." Chavez claimed that the US President wants to portray himself as a "little lamb" and a "pacifist," but pledged that "he won't fool the world... with a little speech, a smile" and that he must "confront the hawks (or) he is going to end up worse than Bush."

13. (SBU) Chavez went on to criticize the Secretary's July 7 interview with the opposition-oriented Globovision television station. He reminded his audience that President Obama had promised him during the April 2009 Summit of the Americas in Port of Spain that the United States would not interfere in Venezuela and questioned rhetorically "what was that the Secretary of State did regarding pronouncements over internal

things in Venezuela?" Chavez also defended his July 10 phone call with WHA A/S Shannon noting that "I am obligated to alert the yanqui empire," contending that "the changes in Latin America will not stop, not even if Obama sends the sixth fleet." He asserted that "the empire" was giving orders, not Obama, which includes "the CIA, the Department of State, the Pentagon, the yanqui military, and Ambassadors."

CALLING HONDURAN MILITARY TO ARMS

14. (SBU) Chavez labeled the interim Honduran government "a disguised dictatorship" and criticized the arrests in Tegucigalpa of journalists from Venezuelan state-owned channel eight and Telesur TV. He noted that "this dawn, in a cowardly manner, the government of 'Gorrileti' ordered the detention of the journalists... and afterwards released them, but now they are not permitted to leave their hotel." He suggested a comparison between "the tragedy that Honduras is currently living in with the liberty that we have here." Chavez added that the right-wing in Latin America has used the "ghost of Chavismo" to justify their actions in countries like Honduras and the United States. He warned that Honduras is on the verge of a popular "explosion" and that he had talked with unnamed Honduran military officials who have allegedly noted their opposition to Micheletti and that a "current of military patriotism" would soon emerge, presumably to act against the interim government.

COMMENT

15. (C) Chavez again appears to be drawing parallels between
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the Honduras coup and the failed Venezuelan coup in 2002, even suggesting that elements within the Honduran military might be willing to overthrow the Micheletti regime. In Venezuela, it was a counter-coup within the military that restored Chavez to power after 48 hours. His inflammatory statements against President Obama appear to indicate frustration over the Secretary's Globovision interview and Chavez's personal marginalization regarding the Honduran crisis, which is currently being negotiated by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias in San Jose. Chavez's attacks against Palmerola are aimed at stirring up images and fears from the past, when many in the region saw the base as a symbol of US covert activities against leftist, anti-US regimes. End
Comment.
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